

**PUBLIC WORKS & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Public Works and Transportation Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge, New York in the Clerk's Conference Room on Wednesday, **February 6, 2002** at 11:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Joseph Caracappa, Chairman
Legislator Brian Foley, Vice-Chair
Legislator David Bishop
Legislator Andrew Crecca

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Paul Sabatino II, Counsel to the Legislature
John Ortiz, Budget Review Office
B.J. McCartan, Legislative Aide to Presiding Officer Tonna
Phyllis McAlevey, Legislative Aide to Legislator Caracappa
Nicole DeAngelo, IR/County Executive's Office
Charles Bartha, Commissioner, Suffolk County Department of Public Works
Richard LaValle, Suffolk County Department of Public Works
Ben Wright, Suffolk County Department of Public Works
Leslie Mitchel, Suffolk County Department of Public Works
Cesar Malaga, LIRRCC, Hispanic-American Association

NOT PRESENT:

Legislator Angie Carpenter

Minutes Taken By:

Kimberly Castiglione, Legislative Secretary

(The meeting was called to order at 11:40 a.m.)

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

If everyone would please stand for the Pledge.

(Salutation)

Thank you. We have one card, Cesar Malaga.

MR. MALAGA:

My name is Cesar Malaga. I live at 11 Maplewood Road in West Babylon. I am from the Long Island Rail Road Commuters Council. My role in that is to provide the best and affordable transportation here in Suffolk County. Not only the Long Island Rail Road, but all transportation. I am also representing the Hispanic-American Association, which are the minorities here in Suffolk County.

Now, my concern, I do not know what the role of the Transportation Committee is here for Suffolk County, I do not know exactly, but my concern is this, the fare increase that is happening today. As a matter of fact, in today's newspaper we see here Suffolk Bus Fares Going Up. Now, I spoke with Senator Trunzo, who has tried to get the amount of money required to get enough funding necessary to prevent the fare increase. Now, one thing I don't see here in this budget that you have, is that we are getting 40 percent from the State, 30 percent from County, and 22 percent of the fare. Now, transportation also gets from the federal government. I don't see anything here. We can get the transportation funds

necessary from the federal government.

We are trying to provide the best, affordable transport for our people. And the people that the County is targeting to are the minorities, people who can least afford the fare increase, and also senior citizens, who have a fixed income. Senior Citizens cannot drive cars. Many of them are not allowed to drive and they have to travel from one place to another. And so you are affecting them. And the minorities are the lowest paid workers here in the County, as all of you know, that the companies that provide jobs in Suffolk County are paid the lowest wages. Many times the Long Island Business Bureau, they said that they cannot get qualified people to work in the County. You cannot get a qualified worker here in the County if you are paying the lowest salaries. So, many of the people who are qualified, they have to go to the City of New York or New Jersey to work. You are targeting the minority of people who can least afford the increase of fare.

My suggestion is I think rather than increasing the fare you should wait until some other place comes up with the funds necessary. There is a sum of two-hundred and so many thousand dollars, \$250,000. But I when I spoke to him earlier last week, I was told that I do not know why you only asked for that amount from the State, that he should have asked for more, because transportation, we need to improve transportation in Suffolk County.

I spoke with Mr. Shannon in charge of transportation. There are many places in which we need shelters. We need shelters in Babylon. We need a bench for the people to wait. And there are other areas in which I asked him install shelters and benches for the people who are waiting and they have provided it.

Now, any of you that travel around the world, when these bus transportation -- you see the little stickers there that show how the bus route runs and also the time, what time they arrive. Underdeveloped countries have those, and here we are, the nation with all the technology and everything else, and we do not have the signs where the stops are.

Now, many of the people that have called me, Hispanics, senior citizens, they are all asking me to do everything possible. I feel in the best interest of our residents of Suffolk County, and also some from Nassau that use our buses, we should hold the fare increase, and should the State budget be, you know, approved in August or something, you are not going to run out of the money. So let's just wait with the fare increase.

As I say, I do not know what your role is here on transportation, but we do need to improve transportation in Suffolk County. People ask why don't we have bus service on Sundays. Senior citizens and people want to travel from one area to another. We can have limited service or we can make surveys from areas how many must work with businesses, because there are many factories. We need the buses so people can go to work easily. So there are a lot of studies that we can make, but to make studies, it takes money. To make surveys, it takes money. But, you know, the people who know most about how we can improve the bus system for the people to use are actually the bus drivers. The bus drivers know where they need buses. In the daytime we do not have to run, you know, 60 passenger bus. Maybe we can run minibuses. There is a lot of work we can do.

My role with the Long Island Rail Road Commuters Council, we have done improvements that many of you guys don't read in the papers. Many of you don't commute to the City, but we have done many work with the Long Island Rail Road, where we worked with the federal government. So I don't see why, you know, as I said, you know, we cannot get federal funds to subsidize our transportation. We are trying to, you know, eliminate people driving. Our highway is so congested. I know Dave Bishop because I am meeting with a group that we are trying to prevent the asphalt here on Long Island. That is not the solution for transportation to meet the needs of the people. We need mass transit. And now what you are doing here in Suffolk County, is we have the highest police department, paid police department, here in the County. We have the highest teachers paid in Suffolk County, and now you are coming up with this highest paid for a bus fare in the County. We read in the papers how about two or three months ago the County wasted over three million dollars paid to this developer --

CHAIRMAN CARACCAPA:

Let's keep to transportation.

MR. MALAGA:

We have monies that can be allocated to transportation. You have a budget. You can, you know, come out with the money. You can look different places where you can get the money.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Just for your information, Mr. Malaga, in this year's Operating Budget when we got into the transportation aspect of it, and I think Legislator Foley brought this up when you spoke at the last legislative session. We found and our Budget Review Office found that the transportation runs two million short, and that we as a legislative body, and those who work on the budget committee day after day in this building, we restored two million dollars to the bus line and the transportation line, and if we didn't, the fares would have went up maybe double than what they did. So believe me when I tell you what we had to deal with in this year's budget was immense and for it to come out with only a quarter increase at this point in time is nothing short of a miracle. And if you sat in on those hearings and sessions that we went over the budget and Legislator Crecca and Bishop were part of that, and Legislator Foley led the way, I think you would be pretty impressed on how we actually kept the fare down as low as possible. And Charlie, just to speak on federal funding, we receive federal funding, don't we?

COMM. BARTHA:

We receive federal funding. I would like to point out that the fare, this increase of 25 cents brings the fares equal with that of Nassau County and New York City and are measured by a revenue mile and operating hour revenue that we have the most cost efficient system in the country.

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

But why don't we have maps inside and schedules?

COMM. BARTHA:

We have schedules that we can hand out, we have information numbers people can call. The signs at the bus stops are the signs we have done for many, many years. We have secured a grant and that will be happening – off the top of my head I can't tell you when, but that is something that is in progress.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

Because that is a very legitimate point.

COMM. BARTHA:

Yes. I have been other places myself and I have seen signs like that. It really facilitates you getting around.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

It will facilitate more users also, which only benefits us.

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

Could you write the Chairman and let us know when?

COMM. BARTHA:

Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

We appreciate your comments.

MR. MALAGA:

Well, gentlemen, the only thing I am asking you is fund the fare increase. I am sure he is going to come up with the money.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Well, if he does, we will most likely get together as a committee and see what we can do to rescind the fare increase, but as of right now it went forward because we had no choice, unless we would have lost bus service throughout the County like you wouldn't believe.

LEGISLATOR FOLEY:

On that point, too. It is not the Legislature per say that raised the rates, it is the Division of Transportation, the Director of the Division of Transportation, Mr. {Shinnick}, who held the – we gave him the authority to hold the hearings, but the ultimate decision on whether to raise rates or not rests with him. What we can do, and as I had mentioned at the general meeting when you spoke, is that if and when the State gives a generous increase to the STOA funding, to State Transportation Operating Aid funding, if they give us a good increase as the Chair just mentioned, then we can revisit the issue and try to rescind the fare increase.

The situation that this local government is in, and local governments throughout the State, whether it is city governments or county governments, we have more and more State mandates thrust on us. Our costs are increasing every year because of these mandates. In this case there is a \$2 million shortfall when the budget was proposed. We in the Legislature put those monies in for the budget. If we didn't do that, not only would you be talking about a rate increase right now, but you would be talking to us about bus routes that would have been eliminated. So we prevented the elimination of bus routes because we put back in \$2 million. And that \$2 million that we put back into the budget is not reflected with this 25 cent fare increase. That only covers a very small part of the \$2 million that we put back into transportation.

I just want to finish with this point. I mentioned it before, but I will say it again for today's committee meeting. Last year we were promised by the State \$10 million. They came through with only seven million, or 7.3. So, if and when the State or State officials, whether the best of intentions or not, they said that they are going to give us money. That's fine, but they have said that in the past to us. So we need to see the money in hand in order to make some judgements on what we should do with transportation.

Improvements have to be made, everyone agrees with that. I am glad you are now attending these committee meetings because over the last several years we have made improvements and these have been improvements that the Legislature had initiative, much more than the Executive Branch, about extending routes, creating new bus routes, extending the hours, trying to have hours match the areas of employment, particularly in western Suffolk County where we have buses early in the morning and later at night to match the hours of employment for those bus patrons who are employed at certain industrial centers in western Suffolk.

There is certainly more that has to be done, there is no doubt about it, but the facts as I lay them out and as the Chair did, hopefully gives you better appreciation of what we are trying to do and what we have been up against to try to appropriately fund this particular area. It is a challenge. But that rate increase does not come close to matching the increase in funding that we gave to transportation by over two million dollars.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Okay. Mr. Malaga, we thank you. Are there any other speakers? Hearing none, we will go to the agenda.

TABLED RESOLUTIONS

PRIME I.R. 2141-01 – Authorizing execution of an agreement by the Administrative Head of Suffolk County Sewer District No. 3 – Southwest with the developer of Farmingdale Villas. (Public Works & Transportation)(Co. Exec)(sent back to committee @ 1/29 general

session)

Prime 2141 was sent back to committee from the full Legislature. There was some concerns, Mr. Wright, about this property being in Nassau County. Could you give us an update on it?

MR. WRIGHT:

Back in 1977 there was an agreement between Nassau and Suffolk that had a lot of logic and cost effectiveness into it where certain parcels that were in one County or the other were best served by going to the other County for sewer service, otherwise there would be many pumping stations along the County lines.

This is one of those parcels that was not included in that agreement.

The majority of this project is within Suffolk County, within the district, where the proposed two apartment units and a small storage area are Nassau County. So the applicant made a request to the Sewer Agency and that was the recommendation, to connect it to Sewer District 3 as a contractee.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Okay. I got the correspondence that you sent and I read it. I still need to talk to Legislator Postal about a few issues relating to this. She still has some concerns and I am going to afford her the opportunity to speak to me about this.

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

Motion to table.

LEGISLATOR FOLEY:

Second.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

There is a motion to table by Legislator Bishop, second by Legislator Foley. All in favor? Opposed? Tabled. **(Vote: 4/0/0/1 Not Present: Legislator Carpenter)**

PRIME I.R. 1029-02 – Imposing moratorium on Sewer connections by properties located outside Suffolk County Sewer District No. 3 Southwest and establishing priority list. (Public Works & Transportation) (Postal)

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

Did Legislator Postal make corrections to this?

MR. SABATINO:

Not since the last meeting, no.

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

Motion to table.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

Second.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Motion to table by Legislator Bishop, second by Legislator Crecca. All in favor? Opposed? It is tabled. **(Vote: 4/0/0/1 Not Present: Legislator Carpenter)**

I.R. 1050-02 – Authorizing retrofitting of traffic lights and LED fixtures. (Economic Development & Energy & Public Works & Transportation) (Cooper)

Originally at the last committee meeting I thought we were prime and we are not. I can't see how we are not prime because it has to do with traffic lights throughout the County.

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

Who is prime?

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Economic Development and Energy.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

With the permission of the Chairman I would like to speak to the Presiding Officer about that.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

You can.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

I looked at the bill several times and I don't see why it is not Public Works.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Well, I firmly believe that this should have been Public Works. Why it is not, it is baffling, but we are not at this point in time. I am going to make a motion to defer to prime and get it off my agenda.

LEGISLATOR FOLEY:

Second the motion.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

There is a motion to defer to prime and a second. All in favor? Opposed? Deferred.

(Vote: 4/0/0/1 Not Present: Legislator Carpenter)

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

PRIME I.R. 1151-02 – Amending the 2002 Capital Budget & Program and appropriating funds in connection with the installation of Emergency Systems for Major County Owned Buildings/NYS Fire Standards (CP 1710)(Public Works & Transportation and Finance & Financial Services)(Co. Exec.)

Charlie.

COMM. BARTHA:

Following the events of September 11th we took a look at the Dennison Building and the Riverhead County Center. What this resolution will do is provide funding for a card access system to both buildings, provide for security cameras and some security booths.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

It is about time. Motion by myself.

LEGISLATOR FOLEY:

Second.

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

On the motion, Legislator Bishop.

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

At this building and the Dennison Building we are going to have security booths?

COMM. BARTHA:

Riverhead County Center. When I say security booths – when in the Dennison Building, for example, when you come there is an ATM machine when you come in that area. There will be a security person there. Not by the ATM, after you come in through the second set of doors because not everyone will have the card to access. You will have deliveries coming in and people who have appointments, so we will have a security person there. Right now you

have got a policeman there.

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

Right. So this will – we will no longer have the policeman there?

COMM. BARTHA:

That's the plan.

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

That's the plan? That's a good plan.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

Are we looking at buildings beyond the Dennison Building and like Griffing Center in Riverhead?

COMM. BARTHA:

We are looking – not immediately with this. We are looking at with respect to the HVAC system. The Legislature passed a resolution about deterring HVAC systems from bioterrorism efforts.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

But I am talking about access and security. I am not saying – I know it is not part of this bill, but is there anybody within Public Works who is looking at those other buildings and just seeing what, if any, security needs are needed.

COMM. BARTHA:

Not immediately. There has been some discussion about it. I will just throw out, for example, at our building in Yaphank we are right down the block from the minimum security facility. When people are released from the minimum security facility, the first building they can get into, besides police headquarters, is our building to make a phone call. Typically they don't stop at police headquarters. I think you can make an argument that we should have card access security, and I am sure there are many other buildings.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

That is what I am saying. Maybe if – I don't know if you have the resources to do that, but take a look at our County buildings, see which ones may need, and bring it back to us.

COMM. BARTHA:

I can give you a little bit of a preview of our securing the HVAC systems. That is going to lead to recommendations for card key access because in order to secure the HVAC systems, you have to secure the building, because anybody can come into a building with that sort of agent and release it into the register and it will get circulated through the building. So it is not just the air intakes outside the building that have to be secured, the building itself. An outgrowth of that report and resolution will be a report that will include card key access recommendations at other buildings. So the answer to your question is yes.

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

Do you think that this would be eligible for a Homeland Security Federal Grant?

COMM. BARTHA:

Not that I have heard of.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

Do we have anybody who can look into that in one of the departments?

COMM. BARTHA:

If we had a grant writer.

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

Do we have that new Ginny Fields bill from last year, the –

MR. SABATINO:

They were all defeated.

LEGISLATOR BISHOP:

Can you let us know who the grant writer is for the department?

COMM. BARTHA:

We will contact the County Exec's Office. I will speak to Joe Michaels.

MR. SABATINO:

It got vetoed and the veto was sustained. To me that is defeated.

(1151 Vote: 4/0/0/1 Not Present: Legislator Carpenter)

CHAIRMAN CARACAPPA:

Okay. We are all set. Is there any other business? We are adjourned.

(The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.)

{ } Denotes Spelled Phonetically